

How Far Will China 'De-Mao-ize?'

Oct. 30 (NSIPS) — The People's Republic of China that "stood up," in Mao Tse-tung's words, upon completing its Revolution in 1949 is now trying to stand up again after two dark decades of Mao's ruinous rule. A mere month after Mao's death Sept. 9, the surviving leadership moved to reverse most of Mao's domestic policies and place China on the road back to sanity. Fatuous comparisons to the Soviet's post-Stalin period notwithstanding, Maoism was never a question of excesses or errors committed in execution of a correct general policy, but a horrible derailment of China's struggle for development that inherently could not — and did not — generate widespread support in China. The question posed by the swift demise of Maoism is not why it was junked so speedily, but why it was tolerated for 20 long years.

Since 1953, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party has been rent with controversy over the proper development course for the country. While the debate produced no stable factional configuration until the early 1960s, the issue was always between the same two tendencies: a bureaucratic technocratic approach championed by Chou En-lai, and a paranoid schizophrenic one championed by Mao, based on magic and fantasy.

The former represented in large measure the Soviet model, based on heavy industry development and intensive scientific and technical education, administered by a state bureaucracy. The approach was by no means free of difficulties, especially in regard to agricultural development, and what China needed most by the late 1950s was the opportunity for its leaders to honestly debate out alternate courses, new proposals, etc. But by forcing his own supposed "solution" to the forefront of debate, Mao prevented the needed real discussion and created a circus show in which, in effect, the technocrats found themselves in an extended argument with a faction of functional baboons capable only of parroting phrases about the primacy of "class struggle" over economics.

The technocrat, or "economist" faction, emerged victorious for the first time in this year's early October's purge of the Maoist faction leaders including Mao's wife. But they emerged still shackled by the Frankenstein's monster of the Maoist cult they had permitted to exist for so long, and which had kept them imprisoned throughout Mao's living days, despite their overwhelming superiority of Party support at every point.

What has become known as Maoism is an eclectic accretion of policies and slogans developed or adopted by Mao at key junctures of his lifetime battle to control the Chinese Communist Party and use it to enthrone himself as a modern emperor. Its current form matured during two crucial battles against the CCP, the "Great Leap Forward" of 1958-61, and the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" of 1965-68. During the former, Mao insisted that peasant muscle and will power could short-circuit decades of industrial and technological development. The result was a halving of industrial output by 1961, mass famine, and utter chaos in management and planning. The disaster forced Mao to retire for two years from economic management, but the mess he created compelled the economist faction left in control to junk their heavy industry focus and concentrate on restoring basic agricultural production.

Allowed a respite by the economists, Mao made a comeback in 1965. He made the stopgap focus on agriculture into a permanent principle, and launched an attack on the entire economist faction for having "restored capitalism" by their emphasis on economic growth. Since 90 per cent of the Party supported the economists, Mao used the Army to organize his youth "Red Guards" to rampage in the streets for a "Cultural Revolution." By 1968, Mao had wrecked the CCP, brought the country to the

verge of civil war and breakdown, and forced the Army to take over the country. Most competent economic leaders were in disgrace or dead. Mao then imposed the "cultural" part of his program: half of all school-time for students at all levels was to be spent in manual labor, much of the rest in political sloganeering; science was to be exclusively practical, with no theoretical research; college enrollment was to be kept tiny (only 20 per cent of India's, for example) and open only on political, not academic criteria; no foreign films, books (except technical) or cultural influences were to be allowed; etc.

Nonetheless, the pro-Mao faction that emerged from the cultural revolution, composed necessarily of inexperienced opportunists who used the Cultural Revolution as a short-cut to power, was incapable by background and temperament of running the country. The Party base of the economists, now headed by Chou En-lai as the only prominent survivor of that faction, was pressed back into service to avoid collapse. Chou then skillfully maneuvered the downfall of Lin Piao, the chief Maoist leader in the Army; eased some of the Armymen out of civilian roles; and began rehabilitating or "liberating" hundreds of purged cadres, chief among them Teng Hsiao-ping, a former chief Party administrator until purged in 1966.

By 1974, Chou was able to begin — without changing the Maoist rhetoric — to undermine the Maoist labor-intensive, rural strategy through the purchase of foreign technology — 13 modern fertilizer plants, many chemical plants and textile mills, and a giant steel complex. He even accepted over \$1 billion in foreign credits. In 1975, the ailing Chou sponsored his chosen successor Teng in pushing for foreign technology to help develop China's off-shore oil for export to pay for high-technology imports. Teng also attacked the Maoist destruction of education; its strait-jacketing of culture, and its mismanagement and decentralization of the economy.

But alerted to these developments, the dottering Mao moved to limit them, sponsoring a veiled attack on Chou in 1974, boycotting the National People's Congress organized by Chou in January 1975 to make official Chou's development plans, squashing Chou's acceptance of foreign credit, attacking his protégé Teng in Sept. 1975, and finally dumping Teng after Chou's death in Jan. 1976 and letting loose the Maoist faction against the Chou-Teng program.

Why Not Attack Mao

Given the overwhelming national support for the economist faction's policies, and the manifest disaster into which Maoism had plunged the country, what must be explained is why Mao and his monstrous "Thought" were not attacked and destroyed a long time ago.

Following the "Great Leap" fiasco, the economist faction then headed by Teng Hsiao-ping and Liu Shao-chi did begin an attack. A searing campaign against Mao was waged for a year in the Peking Evening News during 1961-62 in a series of 30 Satires of Mao by anti-Maoist faction member Teng-to. In "Great Empty Talk," Teng wrote: "Some people have the gift of gab. They can talk endlessly on any occasion, like water flowing from an undammed river. After listening to them, however, when you try to recall what they have said, you can remember nothing. Making long speeches without really saying anything, making confusion worse confounded by explaining, or giving explanations which are not explanatory.... I would advise those friends given to great empty talk to read more, think more, say less, and take a rest when the times comes for talking."

No Chinese reader familiar with Mao's uncensored speeches could miss the aptness of this attack on Mao.

But when Mao counterattacked, the opposition faltered and drew back. At this and other key moments, Mao challenged his opponents to purge him, or shut up, and at no point were they prepared to purge him, for to do so would mean tackling the Frankenstein monster they were complicit in creating — the public cult of Maoism. Their delusion was their belief that they could remain in practical control without challenging the words that contradicted their deeds.

Moreover, the ranks of the economist faction were infiltrated by a personally loyal Maoist, the contradictory Chou En-lai. Chou never wavered either from his support for economist economic policies or from his personal loyalty to Mao Tse-tung. At crucial points, he swung his support behind Mao to prevent his being toppled — only to later undermine the implementation of Mao's policies. His mentality was ultimately that of the Mandarin to the emperor, a capable administrator loyal only to the emperor but with the self-appointed task of saving the emperor from the consequences of his own stupid policies.

The Campaign Against the Soviet Union

The same gutlessness that induced Teng, Liu and others to concede to Mao full propaganda control led them to give Mao a free hand in foreign policy. Mao opened up the breach with the Soviet Union beginning in the late 1950s to give him factional clout within China — it was a cheap ploy to maintain power (though Mao had nurtured a peasant's intense hatred of the Soviet Union since the 1930s). By establishing the Soviet Union as an evil, expansionist and "revisionist" bogeyman, Mao could label anyone pushing Soviet-style development policies — i.e., the entire economist majority of the Party — as both "revisionists" and disloyal traitors.

Once Mao had institutionalized the anti-Soviet line, it was very difficult to challenge it. In 1965 the Chief of Staff Lo Jui-ching and others argued for a military agreement with the Soviets in a united front against the United States in Vietnam. Lo's immediate purge was the opening of the Cultural Revolution. A few months later, Liu and Teng also decided they wanted to reorient toward Moscow, but they failed to influence policy and were shortly purged.

Hence the irony that with Mao gone, practical day to day policy has already reverted to the Chou-Teng 1974-75 program, but the Frankenstein's monster outlives its creator. The current repudiation of Maoism is done in the name of carrying out Mao Tse-tung's proletarian revolutionary line." However, the farce has worn dangerously thin. Purging Mao's wife and her key lieutenants for being "capitalist roaders" — the normal Maoist epithets for the economists — strains credulity even farther than Mao dared to go. There is no viable alternative to sooner or later confessing that the emperor had no clothes, that there were no "capitalist roaders," and that Mao made a lot of mistakes.

In the same manner, the split with the Soviet Union which has never had a logical rationale — it merely cut off aid and made China appear ludicrous to the Third World — will have to be ended. Once the economy returns to an essentially Soviet-style structure, the "revisionist" charge will become completely untenable. The main question, which is no doubt at the center of continuing policy debates within the victorious anti-Maoist coalition, is certainly this one — how fast and how far to "de-Maoize."

"The dollar system is on the verge of collapse. The dollar and everything that depends on it is bankrupt —when the collapse will occur is entirely a political question. There is only one solution: the declaration of an international debt moratorium on major categories of debt, especially those related to the dollar. The IMF and the World Bank are bankrupt. Then new credit must be created to maintain production and employment. We must immediately form an International Development Bank to replace the IMF and related institutions."

—U.S. Labor Party Presidential Candidate,
Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.
Bonn Press Conference,
April 24, 1975

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